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***Women's History Review* (2016)**

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2016.1148505

‘When the Fires Burned Too Close to Home: Southern Women and the Dislocations of the Home-front in the American Civil War.’

Submission for *Women’s History Review*
Worcester ‘Home Fronts’ Conference (2014)
Special Issue

REVISED JUNE 2015

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Abstract

For southern women during the American Civil War, the concept of home-front and battlefront was often a distinction without a difference. What had been domestic space became, over the course of the conflict, military, medical and memorial space. As their homes became hospitals and their gardens, graveyards, many found themselves adrift. Whether as white refugees, fleeing the invading armies, or as slaves, fleeing toward freedom, theirs was a dislocated world, positioned between home-front and battlefront, between slavery and freedom. Approaching the Civil War through its dislocations, however, allows us to see more clearly not just the class, gender, and political distinctions on the southern home-front, but the ways in which the war opened up a new conceptual space for freedwomen in the post-war nation; one created by an imperative toward domestic stability that was driven as much by the Union armies and the federal government as by southern women themselves.

Some six months after the start of the American Civil War, Confederate refugee Judith McGuire contemplated her family's future. 'Our prospect of getting home becomes more and more dim; my heart sinks within me, and hope is almost gone,' she wrote toward the end of 1861. 'What shall we do,' she wondered,

> if the war continues until next winter, without a certain resting-place? Our friends are kind and hospitable, open-hearted and generous to a wonderful degree…we are made to feel not only welcome, but that our society gives them heartfelt pleasure. Other friends, too, are most kind in giving invitations 'for the war'—'as long as we find it agreeable to stay,' etc.; but while this is very gratifying and delightful, yet we must get some place, however small and humble, to call home.[1]

Although, as her comments reveal, Judith was hardly destitute among strangers, nevertheless her sense of loss was palpable, and almost inevitable. 'Uprootedness,' as the French philosopher Simone Weil noted, 'occurs whenever there is military conquest, and in this sense conquest is nearly always an evil' because, as she explained, to 'be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul.'[2]

Weil was writing in London during the Second World War, specifically in the context of her own country's occupation by the Nazis. And yet she was not writing about the refugee experience as one involving the physical uprootedness from home solely, but about the deeper dislocations that war produces, the separation of the individual from the community that 'preserves in living shape certain particular

treasures of the past and certain particular expectations for the future.' In many respects, of course, Weil's observation is applicable to all wars; but not entirely. What makes America's civil conflict so valuable for our understanding of the dislocations of the home-front at war is that the refugee experience in the South was not a wholly negative one. Informed both by class and race, the Confederate home-front proved as productive of new opportunities for African American women as it was destructive of many of the 'expectations for the future' that white women entertained.[3]

The Confederate home-front was a war-torn landscape, certainly, but one defined not simply as that space between home-front and battlefront, between domestic stability and military destruction, but between slavery and freedom. As such, it serves as a reminder that the very term refugee is a multivalent one that delineates 'a world of different socioeconomic statuses, personal histories, and psychological or spiritual situations.' Further, it underscores the fact that war's impact on home-fronts and their populations cannot fully be understood solely with reference to the mass, cross-border displacements that resulted from the global conflicts of the twentieth century. The historiography of warfare frequently deploys a taxonomy of tragedy that classifies these conflicts as definitive in respect of their physical and psychological impact; and in the particular case of refugees, the 'emplacement' of the refugee camp as 'a vital device of power' is firmly identified with the Second World War. Yet America's civil war exhibited early examples of many of the features more commonly associated with home-fronts in later wars, particularly as far as women were concerned.[4]

Although warfare is, as Jeanie Attie reminds us, 'naturally gendered,' juxtaposing 'masculine' qualities of aggressiveness and strength with what are perceived as more 'feminine' nurturing qualities, these conceptual distinctions often

collapse or, as was the case in the Civil War, become reconfigured in the face of war's realities.[5] In the particular case of America's civil war, the distinction depended on a domestic ideal that was really a post-war construction; a simplified, self-serving narrative that elevated the home-front sacrifices of Confederate women to the exclusion of any other. As southern journalist W.J. Cash famously summed it up, the white woman was the 'South's Palladium,' a 'shield-bearing Athena gleaming whitely in the clouds, the standard for its rallying, the mystic symbol of its nationality in the face of the foe.' A combination of 'the lily-pure maid of Astolat' and 'the pitiful mother of God,' the southern woman could 'send strong men into tears…I verily believe,' Cash opined, that 'the ranks of the Confederacy went rolling into battle in the misty conviction that it was wholly for her that they fought.'[6]

That this romantic ideal bore little relation to real women's lives goes without saying. That it served the white patriarchy's political purposes during and after the war has been said quite often. But the southern woman's civil war was never a narrative that belonged to the Confederacy alone. Loyalties in the Civil War South were divided, and not just between slave and free. Not all southern women supported the Confederacy, and some Confederate women lived in Union-held territory. The Border States, nominally Union, sustained their own version of civil conflict, more brutal for being simultaneously in the middle and on the margins of the 'War between the States.' When the home actually became the battlefront, as it did in much of the American South and in the Border States between 1861 and 1865, it destroyed any sense that white women could serve as fixed feminine exemplars in a domestic firmament for which men, at least ostensibly, fought. For African American women, however, the story was more complex. The trajectory it traced was in quite the opposite direction, away from an antebellum domestic world centred on white women

alone and toward a more inclusive, war-driven gendered construction of family and freedom.[7]

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One of the Civil War's very first big battles, First Bull Run (Manassas) had brought out picnickers, members of the public who came out with baskets of provisions to enjoy, as they believed, a martial show. In the war's second year, the public had learned its lesson, and fled in the face of a big battle, as contemporary prints reveal. [*Figure 1*] By the war's final stages, as the South's major cities fell to Union forces, the sight of 'panic-stricken refugees, homeless and penniless,' became commonplace. For many elite women, however, the dislocations of war came long before the fighting itself, and involved far more than simply having to leave their homes; for them the war threw into sharp relief the political, class and social tensions that had long existed in the South but that had, until 1861, remained beneath the surface. A case in point was Judith McGuire herself. As an ardent Confederate, daughter of a Virginian Supreme Court Justice, and wife of Episcopalian minister and founder of the Theological Seminary in Alexandria, John P. McGuire, Judith's commitment to the Confederate cause was total and unquestioning, but it came at a cost.[8]

Within weeks of the fall of Fort Sumter, Judith had begun the painful process of closing up her household. She had already sent her daughters away, and her sons had signed up to fight and were then in training camp. 'Our friends and neighbors have left us,' she confided to her diary. "Everything is broken up. The Theological Seminary is closed; the High

Figure 1: Sharpsburg citizens leaving for fear of the Rebels September 15, 1862 (Alfred R. Waud, artist). Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. LC-USZC2-3824 (High resolution version available in published article – DOI:10.1080/09612025.2016.1148505)

School dismissed. Scarcely any one is left of the many families which surround us.' It made for an eerie impression, she recalled, the 'peaceful' desolation contrasting with the 'passion and the fanaticism' that had prompted it. Judith hoped that she would not have to leave. She carefully arranged the summer planting in her garden on that assumption, but she was wavering. 'We have a most unsettled feeling,' she recorded, 'with carpets up, curtains down, and the rooms without furniture; but a constant excitement, and expectation of we know not what, supplants all other feelings.' And whilst planting up the flowers, she was considering where to hide the valuables. 'Silver may be buried,' she mused, 'but what is to be done with books, pictures, etc?'[9]

Like many elite women, who comforted themselves with the thought that slavery was a beneficial institution, Judith had decided that, if she had to leave, she would entrust the 'servants' (she did not use the word slaves) with keeping the home in order until she returned. But in that assumption lay the opportunity that many slaves seized to head to Union lines, sometimes with the family silver. Further South, in Georgia, the Colcock-Jones family had made similar assumptions, and had been similarly dismayed, and probably genuinely surprised, that some of their slaves had

chosen to leave them; that one of them, indeed, had rifled the mistress's wardrobe for a dress to get married in, marriage having not been legal under slavery. Across the South the old certainties remained, but the household that had contained them was disintegrating, producing a domino effect that spelled the end not just for slavery, the South's 'peculiar institution,' but for the white way of life constructed around it.[10]

In the end, Judith could not remain. Union troops seized Alexandria on May 24, 1861, and she had to leave quite suddenly. It was well known, as she recorded, that she and her husband had voted for secession. There 'were Union people enough around us,' she observed, 'to communicate everything of the sort to the Federals.' Judith's experiences were not unique. This form of hidden civil war pertained most obviously in Virginia, a state that divided, with West Virginia, in 1861, becoming the first, and only, state formed by, in effect, seceding from the seceding states, but also in Border States such as Missouri, and even in the Confederate heartland, Tennessee, where local loyalties were and remained divided.[11]

Sarah Yeater, a northern woman living in Missouri, experienced this hidden civil war first-hand. Suspected by her neighbours of being pro-Union, but having married into a pro-Confederate family, she was caught in the middle, her experience representative of the internecine nature of civil conflict on the home-front. Sarah's home in Osceola, Missouri was threatened by Union forces, then briefly secured by Confederate ones, but once the latter left, she recalled, 'it was no longer safe for Southern sympathizers to remain.' By early December, 1861, she and her husband's family had 'started to go south, carrying what remained of our property in one two-horse wagon' and hiding their money in the baby's changing bag. Further east, in Alexandria, with Union families 'pointing out the houses of the Secessionists' to federal forces, Judith McGuire also decided 'it most prudent' to leave. 'With a heavy

heart,' she recorded, 'I packed trunks and boxes, as many as our little carriage would hold,' but she had to leave the family dog behind.[12]

Yet although Judith wrote that 'nothing remains to us but the barren, beaten track,' this was not always the case for elite Southern families. They had a geographically dispersed network of friends and family, homes that they were quite used to spending many weeks in over the course of a year, and it was to these that families like Judith's headed. For others, refugee life was far more precarious. Especially in the later years of the war, Confederate and Union women alike were forced to negotiate a landscape of death, disease and destruction; forced to confront the sight of dead bodies—of men and animals—on the roads; to try and establish temporary homes in houses abandoned by their former owners, or previously used as field hospitals by the armies; forced, as Eugenia Bitting was, to scrub the blood from the floors before her family could take shelter in an abandoned house in Georgia; and always to face the threat of violence on the road, violence directed at them or at the slaves they had with them. At the end of 1862, Congress reported on the plight of 'thousands' of Union refugees in Tennessee, and cited 'abundant evidence, independent and concurring, to establish the general fact that they have been ravaged and pillaged, and driven from their homes.'[13]

Such families could not rely on the kindness of strangers. Having found temporary accommodation in Fayetteville, Arkansas, for example, Sarah Yeater's family was soon forced to move on, crossing the Ozarks in search of refuge. But here class divisions revealed themselves, and Sarah's family found that 'the well-to-do planters of Arkansas did not extend hospitality to refugees from north of the mountains.' That the realities of the refugee experience differed greatly depending on class has long been recognized. Indeed, some of the class and gender issues of the

time were encapsulated in the very word 'refugee,' a designation vehemently rejected by some of those to whom it was applied. This, Drew Gilpin Faust argues, was because of its association with the planter elite, whose precipitous flight from the southern coast into the interior at the start of the war was viewed as both unpatriotic and economically motivated; an attempt to retain valuable slave property whilst imposing on the charity of those least able to support this hegemonic hegira.[14]

The planter class certainly enjoyed sufficient resources, financial as well as familial, to remove itself from danger, whether from antagonistic neighbours or hostile armies. It could be active in defence of its own security, where others were forced to be passive in the face of military invasion. And yet, as Faust notes, even for the wealthiest families, what 'may have begun as a choice' soon 'came to seem like a sentence,' and even elite women began to refer to themselves as 'homeless' beggars or 'poor refugees' whose lives were no longer theirs to control. But the idea, and the identity of the refugee was far more varied than its class implications suggested. Location was also a factor. Neither Sarah Yeater nor Judith McGuire were members of the planter elite, but nor did they number among the thousands of 'indigent civilians' forced to rely on government relief and military support. Both belonged to economically secure slave-holding families, but their decision to abandon their homes was not driven by the desire to protect their slave property but by their geographic location. Living in a region that 'suffered more than any other…from the internecine war of neighbor against neighbor,' Sarah was just one of the many 'neutral civilians' forced 'to choose sides or suffer the consequences.'[15]

Judith was far from neutral, but her situation differed only in the degree of danger she faced in Virginia, a state in which some 200,000 residents found themselves dislocated by the war. And she felt acutely the loss of security and status

that the home had long provided for women of her class. 'Home and its surroundings must ever be our chief joy,' she wrote, 'and while shut out from it…there will be a feeling of desolation.' Having moved some thirty-four times over the course of the war, Judith eventually settled in Richmond, and found employment as a clerk in the Confederate Commissary Department. This was a role she loathed, but as one of the temporarily dispossessed she was forced to function both beyond her home and her traditional domestic sphere.[16]

Viewed from the perspective of a later age, Judith's venture, although it was an involuntary one, into the public world of work fits a paradigm of female progress achieved within the context of conflict, a paradigm that may be misleading in many respects as far as America's civil war is concerned. Indeed, for a long time the imperative to draw some positive conclusions from the refugee experience determined the questions historians asked, and some of the answers they arrived at, especially as far as the breakdown of antebellum gender and social patterns was concerned. Although Mary Elizabeth Massey, for example, suggested that the refugee experience proved to be a great social leveller, there is not so much evidence that elite women found this to be the case. First, and as Massey did emphasise, they could, unlike their poorer neighbours, afford to leave, and often had somewhere to go. Second, they were more likely to be forced to move because of their political views and social status, both of which may have set them at odds with some of their neighbours, as Judith McGuire and Sarah Yeater found to their cost. Finally, although they moved, many of their class, racial and gender assumptions moved with them even if the furniture or the family pet was left behind.[17]

Of course there were examples of women for whom the private became public in entirely unanticipated ways. Whilst still in transit, Judith McGuire recorded a visit

from Robert E. Lee's wife. She, too, had been forced to pack up and depart, and was heading further South. She, too, had expressed the hope that she might return to the family home in Arlington, but that was not to be. Occupied by Union troops, her rose garden became a graveyard and the estate itself, in time, Arlington National Cemetery. In her case, the private, domestic space became federal property, and eventually a national memorial. Most southern elite families, of course, did not suffer that fate. For women such as Judith McGuire, the dislocations of war did introduce them into a more public sphere, but one that still functioned within the framework of antebellum kin, cultural and, up to a point, gendered networks. Mary Mallard from Georgia, for example, the wife of a Presbyterian minister, was caught up in the fall of Atlanta and forced to flee. We 'are now numbered amongst the numerous throng of refugees,' she advised a relative, but hers was a temporary inconvenience. She was able to store herself and her furniture in her brother's home in Augusta, and was fully aware of her good fortune in this respect, when so 'many poor refugees are thrown out of their home without a shelter.'[18]

Among this group was Kate Stone's family, from Louisiana. Their experience highlights one of the unusual features of America's civil war in respect not just of refugees but of the civilian population of the South generally. The Federal Government, fighting as it was to hold the Union together, was concerned that the South not fall into total chaos. Throughout the war, therefore, it had an eye to the post-war reconstruction, economic, political and social, of the nation. Emancipation of the nation's slaves became a Union rallying cry, certainly, but neither the northern population nor the Federal Government had any desire to have the former slaves move north; they wanted them back on the land as soon as possible. As a result, the government, through the Union army, attempted to stem the tide of refugees, to

prevent plantation owners from abandoning their homes, and their former chattel from abandoning the fields whose products underpinned the nation's economy.

By 1863, however, and in the aftermath of the Emancipation Proclamation, in states such as Louisiana the fear of renegade soldiers was compounded by a fear of vengeful slaves. This fear was not without foundation. Kate's family was robbed at gunpoint of their horses, homes around them looted by Union soldiers and former slaves, and their own was looted, too, again at gunpoint. It was this last incident that convinced them they could no longer safely remain. Their life had become, as Kate described it, 'a miserable, frightened one,' and they fled from their plantation, Brokenburn, Louisiana to Texas in 1863, where they remained until the war was over. As Kate recalled the traumatic events she defended her family's actions. 'We could not stand more than anyone else,' she noted, 'and nearly everyone left before we did. Our mistake was in not moving everything in the fall.' Only two of their younger slaves agreed to accompany them to Texas, and although Kate was not surprised she was saddened. 'So passes the glory of the family,' she mourned.[19]

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As Kate Stone's comment reveals, the refugee experience for her, as for many Confederate women, did not just involve physical but psychological upheaval. Her domestic dislocation included the social and economic disintegration of a hierarchical slave household structure within which her own social status was assured. Yet even as white women were forced to acknowledge that their domestic landscape had changed beyond recognition, and found themselves having to negotiate altered social, racial and gender relationships, so, too, African American women were faced with the

opportunity to create a different kind of domestic space for themselves. Both have received attention from scholars over the years, but almost as separate entities rather than component parts of a single home-front at war. Our appreciation of the complexities of the home-front during the American Civil War, however, is greatly enhanced if examples of flight *from* war are juxtaposed with those of flight *to* freedom.

African American slaves were also driven, sometimes by their owners, sometimes by government mandate, but often by themselves, away from their homes, ending up behind Union lines and often in refugee or 'contraband' camps, so-called because escaped slaves became known as 'contraband of war.' [*Figure 2*] For many of them, in search not just of safety but of family members sold away before the war, the imperative was not the conservation of a domestic ideal destroyed by the war but the construction of one that the war, and emancipation, finally made possible. For a time, a more positive message was derived from the distinct dislocations experienced by African American women transitioning from slavery to freedom. But even this has come under attack in recent years, as historians take a harder look at the makeshift refugee camps many of these women found themselves in, at the dreadful medical history of these camps, at the exploitation, economic and sexual, that many experienced, at their growing disenchantment with their Union saviours.[20]

Although many escaped slaves were able to take advantage of the educational, medical and material opportunities offered at contraband camps such as, for example, that at Corinth, Mississippi, established in 1862 to accommodate African-American refugees from Mississippi, Tennessee and Alabama, most were not so fortunate. And even Corinth, the 'oldest, least overflowed…best regulated & most satisfactory camp in the Department [of Tennessee],' as it was described by its founder, struggled to

cope with the numbers that arrived. The Union army, indeed, struggled, not just because—as in Missouri at the outset of the war—the refugees, white and African American alike, tended to

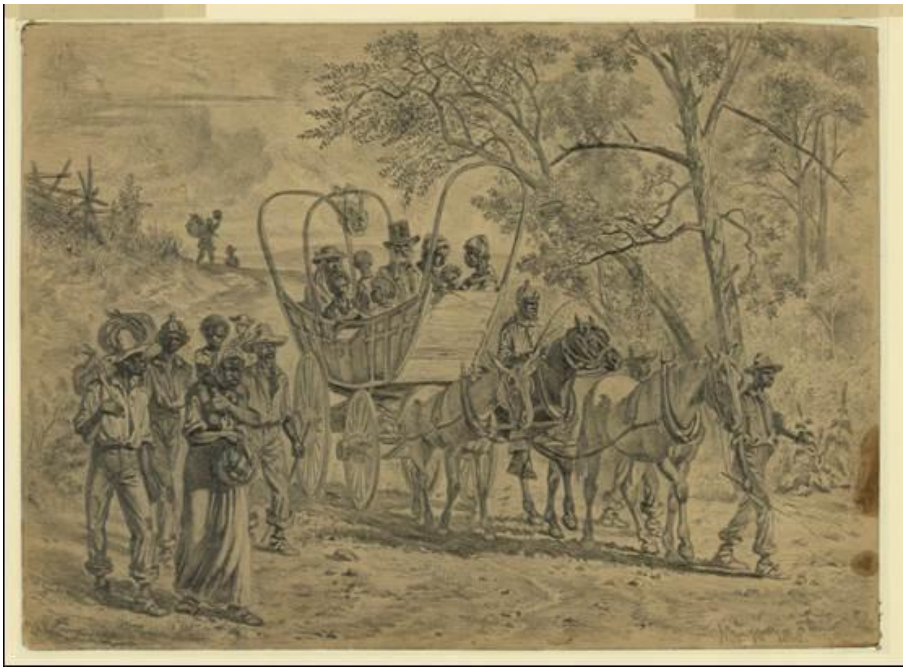

Figure 2: African American refugees coming into the Union lines near Culpeper Court House, Va., November 8, 1863 (Edwin Forbes, artist). Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. LC-USZ62-15661. (High resolution version available in published article – DOI: 10.1080/09612025.2016.1148505)

hamper military manoeuvres, but because of the supplies they consumed and the support they required. Officers sometimes had to deploy their 'private means' to deal with the influx of refugees into Union lines, many of whom, as one noted, 'have travelled hundreds of miles, and have arrived destitute.'[21]

But whereas white refugees could often be given supplies and support to move on, for African American families this was rarely an option, 'One of the most practical questions of the rebellion,' the northern journal *Harper's Weekly* noted at the war's outset, was how 'properly, to clothe and care for the "contrabands"' coming into Union lines at Fort Monroe on the Virginia peninsula, especially the women.

‘The Government partly supplies the men whom it employs,’ the journal noted, but not the women and children, who required clothing and accommodation. Facilities at Fort Monroe, it reported, were both ‘insufficient’ and ‘painfully crowded.’[22]

It was a similar story further south. Colonel Charles Fox of the Fifty-Fifth Massachusetts Volunteers (Colored) recorded the sight of African American refugees fleeing into Charleston, South Carolina. ‘Such an exodus is not often witnessed,’ he observed, but ‘once seen, it could never be forgotten.’ He wondered, however, whether these refugees ‘in any way bettered their condition by leaving their homes on the plantation…To them it appeared a flight from slavery to freedom,’ but many, he knew, ‘perished from want and disease in an overcrowded city.’ The situation was no better even in Washington. There, on Duff Green’s Row, a row of houses on Capitol Hill that was used for housing escaped slaves, overcrowding was rife, with ‘men, women and children all huddled together, without any distinction or regard to age or sex. Some of them,’ a correspondent for the abolitionist journal *The Liberator* reported, ‘were in the most pitiable condition. Many were sick with measles, diphtheria, scarlet and typhoid fever. Some had a few filthy rags to lie on; others had nothing but the bare floor for a couch.’[23]

This was not a problem susceptible of easy solution, even after the Emancipation Proclamation of January 1st, 1863 and the official raising of African American regiments. If anything, having a partner sign up for service in the Union army rendered black women more at risk from white violence, and many were forced to seek safety by following their husbands to camp. This was not something that federal authorities were prepared for. By the third year of the war, further west in Kentucky, one Union officer reported that a ‘large number of colored women and children have accumulated at Camp Nelson. Many of them,’ the officer advised the

Secretary of War, Edwin M. Stanton, 'are the wives and children of our colored soldiers. There will be much suffering among them this winter,' he noted, 'unless shelters are built and rations issued to them.' And so it proved, as historian Jim Downs has detailed in his sobering study of the high rates of disease experienced by African American families transitioning from slavery to freedom. For many, even those who made it to Camp Nelson, emancipation was 'a continuous process of displacement, deprivation, and ultimately death,' one that highlighted 'the astounding vulnerabilities of slaves in heroic pursuit of freedom during the war.'[24]

Despite their many documented shortcomings, nevertheless the contraband camps of the Civil War had a role to play in changing attitudes toward, and providing support for the recently freed population of the South, even if only insofar as the gathering together of freedwomen and their families in distinct locations made the scale of the problem of population displacement so obvious to Union forces and the northern population. These camps may have become, as Stephen McBride has noted, examples of the 'vanished' landscapes of the Civil War, but at the time the space they provided was one in which African American women could stake their own claim to a domestic ideal denied them under slavery. And when that domestic space was compromised or, in one infamous incident when the families of black soldiers were forcibly ejected from Camp Nelson, destroyed, the response was not one of complacency but of censure. The 'ferocity of design and brutality of execution' of the removal of the refugees from the camp prompted one witness to question whether he lived 'in an enlightened age and a Christian land.' The federal government concurred, and established a separate 'Home for Colored Refugees' in the camp.[25]

Contraband camps such as Camp Nelson were contested landscapes, certainly, and hardly secure ones; but they offered stability of a sort to some of their inhabitants,

at least in comparison to the experiences of those unable to reach Union lines, for whom the situation was especially dire, and death from disease not necessarily as protracted as it could be in the camps. Reports from Memphis in the winter of 1863 were grim, particularly as far as female escaped slaves were concerned:

> Many, principally the younger girls, are arrayed in a single thin article of under raiment about equal in covering properties to a very poor vail and occasionally rendered still more airy by being stretched over a ridiculous frame-work of home-made hoops Homeless, friendless, they congregate in the large cotton sheds and vacant buildings here, sleeping, clustered together like swine, in the straw, endeavoring thus to keep warm during the cold, wet nights. Not a few sometimes fail to straighten out and get up with their fellows in the morning, disease and debility having been relieved over night by death. Lying like a dead brute in the litter, a mockery of dirty rags for covering, flung an hour or so after into the earth, the contraband's death is more miserable than her life.

'Something should be done at once for these people,' the reporter urged: '[d]riven from their homes by war, or having come in flight towards a freedom which mocks them, wretched, destitute, starving, hiding in cellars, nesting on the deserted beds of animals, they call for aid immediate and liberal.'[26]

But such aid as did come was not always without cost, and the weather was hardly the worst threat facing African American women. Igntaz Kappner, a Hungarian immigrant and colonel of one of the newly-raised African-American regiments, detailed the situation near Memphis in the spring of 1864, where 'the camps of the

colored women' had been attacked and the women themselves subjected to 'all sorts of outrage.' And as Kappner realised, this was not only appalling in itself, but undermined the Union war effort. 'The black is being made a man by being trusted with arms,' he pointed out, 'and it is very hard for a man to see his family abused and not to use the arm. I am afraid,' he concluded, 'it will loosen discipline if not render it impossible.'[27]

As Kappner's comments revealed, there was at least some recognition by Union forces of the symbiosis between military discipline and domestic stability. Although federal 'intervention in the lives of black families often produced inconsistent results,' the official agenda was concerned with securing and supporting individual family units. And it was not always the case that 'military necessity' trumped 'domestic stability in dealing with African Americans and their families.' As Kappner realised, military effectiveness was seriously compromised without a degree of domestic stability and security being assured for African American women and children. And the logic of that realisation offers an implicit challenge to the assumption that whereas African American men could be inducted into the polity, albeit through violence, black women were rendered passive victims; of renegade soldiers, of their erstwhile owners, of the more impersonal forces of disease exacerbated by the all-too human failings of a federal administration unprepared for the immediate social, economic and personal impact of emancipation and the resultant population dislocations that it produced. This was far from the case. 'From the beginning of the Civil War to its conclusion,' Thavolia Glymph reminds us, 'fugitive slave women commanded the attention of Richmond and Washington, slaveholders and nonslaveholders, and Southern and Northern commanders and soldiers in the field.'[28]

The implications of that attention for women, however, have been obscured by an emphasis on the 'masculine role of soldiering for the Union' open to black men. Yet what historian Carole Emberton has defined as the 'militarization of freedom,' applied to black women as much as to men, not solely in the degree of violence both experienced on battlefield and home-front alike, but more pertinently in the expansion of the conceptual space of citizenship. In the context of the home-front during the war, 'martial manhood' was a more complex construct than one that simply 'reduced freedom to nothing less than a violent struggle between men,' both on the battlefield and beyond it. Contained within it was the expectation that the destruction of the white southern 'family,' bemoaned by Kate Stone, paved the way for the construction of the black one, albeit along a male-headed, nuclear family model that took little account of the familial complexities that slavery had produced.[29]

The domestic ideal espoused by northern reformers, politicians, and federal forces alike was one designed as much to soothe white fears of social upheaval in the South as it was to ensure social stability and economic self-sufficiency for freedmen and women. Established during the war to assess the impact of emancipation, the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission (AFIC) sought to reassure the Secretary of War that African American refugees 'need not be, except for a very brief period, any burden whatever on the Government,' but rather 'auxiliaries to the Government in its prosecution of the war.' The Commission deliberately highlighted the similarities between white and black refugees. The dislocations of the war affected both alike, and it would be 'a mistake,' the Commission stressed, 'to suppose that assistance has been needed or obtained exclusively by persons of color…In some places,' it reported, 'the number of poor whites succored has been greater than that of poor blacks.'[30]

The picture was rather more complicated when it came to discussions of the domestic status of former slaves. Within the Union army, some argued that the women who sought refuge at the various contraband camps were 'engaged in lewd business annoying everything and everybody in the vicinity.' The very idea that female refugees were seeking to 'follow their husbands who have entered the service,' it was suggested, had 'no force or truth in it.' Yet it is crucial not to grant too much credence to the racial dimension of this particular accusation which was, after all, also levelled at white women who followed their husbands to war, and prompted suspicion even of those who sought to offer nursing services to the Union army.[31]

The dismissive view that there were 'no binding marital relations' among slaves, who instead took 'new wives and husbands with every change of the seasons' was not uncommon, but nor was it universal. Although many Union officials undoubtedly shared the negative racial perspective of southern whites, and sought to encourage freedwomen's domestic stability solely out of a sense that African American 'sexuality was less controlled and more passionate than that of whites' and therefore a risk both to economic efficiency and national morality, not all did. And in seeking to shape the pattern of the black family from the template already applied to the white, even the negative perspective served only to expand the domestic ideal across the colour line.[32]

The AFIC certainly had a rather more sophisticated comprehension of the problems facing freedwomen, and acknowledged that the 'disintegration of the family relation' was one of the great tragedies of slavery. It also expressed confidence that the former slaves could be encouraged to follow white familial norms, even if some of that encouragement verged on the types of 'compulsion' that the Commission had

argued was not desirable. Contradicting itself somewhat in this respect, the Commission proposed

> cases should occur in which a refugee proves refractory and refuses to acknowledge as his wife, or to marry, the woman with whom he has been living and who is the mother of his children, he should no longer be allowed to cohabit with her or to live with the children; but if the proof of his previous relationship to them be sufficient, he should be compelled to contribute to their support from his wages in the same manner as if they were his family by legal marriage.[33]

Although unrealistic in many of its prescriptions, and however prejudiced many of its proponents were, this domestic model meant that the African American woman, in particular, was no longer located as a victim of the battlefront, a 'contraband of war,' but a crucial component of a home-front upon which her former status as slave was gradually being reconfigured as one of citizen. And not the least significant aspect of that process, however erratically it was undertaken, was that the gender assumptions that had informed white women's status before the war informed black women's status during and after it.

At the war's outset, the ideal of white womanhood might have been maintained, any violence against individual women mitigated by the assumption that black women 'were available to be trampled' and abused, but this assumption became less sustainable as the conflict progressed. White men could be, and were, indicted for crimes against black women. Under the terms of General Orders No. 12, issued in the spring of 1862, it was made clear that the 'punishment for rape will be death; and any

violence offered a female, white or colored, with the evident intent or purpose to commit a rape, will be considered as one, and punished accordingly.' The court-martial held in Alabama, only a few months later, to try Colonel John B. Turchin for failing to control the troops under his command during the attack on Athens, Alabama, reinforced the point.[34]

The charges levelled against Turchin included permitting the sacking of the home of Milly Ann Clayton and the attempted 'indecent outrage on the person of her servant girl,' and the actual 'rape on the person of a colored girl' at another house. Some of his troops, too, not only plundered the home and law office of slave-owner John F. Malone, but went to his plantation, and 'quartered in the negro huts for weeks, debauching the females.' Found guilty of conduct unbecoming an officer and a gentleman (among other charges), Turchin was dismissed from the service. The example of one rather notorious case—notorious largely because it reached a court-martial and a white witness had verified the attack on at least one of the black women—does not, of course, diminish the terrors of the home-front as many African American women experienced these.[35]

The AFIC recognised as much in its final report in 1864. 'What remains to the enslaved race?' it asked; 'Life to man? Honor to woman? Any security for either? Nominally, yes,' it suggested, but '[a]ctually, save in exceptional circumstances, no.' It noted that in 'statute laws against murder or rape the word white is not to be found.' So although '[p]ersons of either color appear to be equally protected,' in fact they were not. But this recognition in itself was a marker for the future, evidence of a sea-change, however subtle, however slow, in the official recognition, at least, of the parity between slave and free, black and white on the home-front. For the Union

army, and for the federal government, the black woman as well as the white came to symbolise an ideal of domesticity dislocated and distorted by war.[36]

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Viewed through the dislocations of the home-front, the ways in which the American Civil War extended antebellum gender norms to include a previously excluded group within the post-war polity become clearer. What becomes more apparent, too, is the ways in which this shift was predicated upon a domestic narrative that paralleled, but at the same time implicitly critiqued the version promulgated by elite white women whose patriotism, as LeeAnn Whites has argued, had always been 'peculiarly domestic.' Determined to secure 'their position as dependents, as mothers, wives, and daughters,' however, the white woman's status was achieved only partly in relation to men.[37] Largely it was assured by the status of slaves, whose own domestic roles as mother, wife or daughter were neither stable nor secure. The dislocations of the home-front in the Civil War hardly effected a sudden transformation—at least not for the better—in the lives of freedwomen, but they quite quickly disintegrated the underpinnings of white, elite status, as contemporary cartoonists recognised. [*Figure 3*]

By 1865, with much of the South in ruins, and with African Americans well on the road to freedom, this kind of image mocked the defeat of the South through its women, mocked the Confederacy's pretensions toward separate statehood as it mocked the women's pretensions toward separate status and gentility by emphasising that they, in common with other white refugees, and with many former slaves, had to seek government support to survive. And it was partly in this context that Confederate

women sought, during and after the war, to attempt to reclaim their antebellum status, to reassert the dominance of the domestic in the life of the South, and position themselves as the defenders of homes that their armies had actually been unable to defend. Their strategy was one of denial in defeat. They evinced a determination to obliterate the trauma of the war via a domesticated narrative that downplayed the destruction of the home itself along with the gender, racial and social determinants that sustained it.

Figure 3: Richmond Ladies Going to Receive Government Rations (Alfred R. Waud, artist). One woman saying to another, 'Don't you think that Yankee must feel like shrinking into his boots before such high-toned Southern ladies as we!' as they walk by Union soldier and ruins of Richmond.' *Harper's Weekly*, June 3, 1865. Courtesy of the Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division. LC-USZ62-116427. (High resolution version available in published article – DOI: 10.1080/09612025.2016.1148505)

White women such as Judith McGuire felt acutely the loss of their homes, and struggled to recreate, in exile and later in peace, some version of the domestic ideal they had lost. African American freedwomen faced a greater challenge in attempting to establish some form of domestic stability amidst the dislocations of war and those of status, as they ceased to be slaves but were not yet citizens of the United States. In both cases, the home itself, and the domestic ideal predicated upon it, defined the woman's war, but not, perhaps, in quite the way that Confederate women and their historians have assumed. The Confederate woman is only one, and not necessarily the most significant element in the more complicated landscape of the southern home-front, across which refugees, Union and Confederate, black and white alike, roamed in disarray. It was a landscape in which neighbour turned on neighbour, in which the impersonal forces of disease combined with human violence to render the home-front, so far from a secure counterpoint to conflict, all but uninhabitable; a world of war no less destructive than that of the battlefield itself, but one in which freedwomen, at least, could begin to construct their own domestic space out of the ruins of slavery.

[1] Anon [Judith McGuire], *Diary of a Southern Refugee during the War* (New York: E.J. Hale and Son, 1867) 66, 35.
[2] Simone Weil, *The Need for Roots: Prelude to a Declaration of Duties Towards Mankind* (1952. Reprint. London: Routledge Classics, 2002) 40-41.
[3] Weil, *The Need for Roots*, 41.
[4] Liisa H. Malkki, 'Refugees and Exile: From "Refugee Studies" to the National Order of Things,' *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 24 (1995) 495-523, 496, 498.
[5] Jeanie Attie, 'Warwork and the Crisis of Domesticity in the North,' in Catherine Clinton and Nina Silber (eds.), *Divided Houses: Gender and the Civil War* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992) 247-59, 247.
[6] Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003); Wilbur J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1941) 86.
[7] Anne Firor Scott, *The Southern Lady from Pedestal to Politics, 1830-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970) 222; see also Susan-Mary Grant, "Monuments and Maidens: How the White South (Almost) Came to Terms With Defeat in the American Civil War," *Groniek: Historisch Tijdschrift*, 184 (2010) 285-298; Drew Gilpin Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge, La. 1988); Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead But Not the Past: Ladies Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill 2008) 88.
[8] Cornelia Phillips Spencer, *The Last Ninety Days of the War in North Carolina* (New York: Watchman Publishing Company, 1866) 46.
[9] McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee*, 10-11, 13.
[10] Mrs Mary Jones, journal entries, January 4, 10, and 21, 1865 and Mrs Eva B. Jones to Mary Jones, July 14, 1865, in Robert Manson Myers, *The Children of Pride: A True Story of Georgia and the Civil War*, Abridged Edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984) 527-529, 554.
[11] McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee*, 18-19.
[12] Sarah Janette Yeater, 'My Experience during the War between the States,' *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 4:1 (Spring 1945) 1-30, 10; McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee*, 18.
[13] McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee*, 20; Joan E. Cashin, 'Into the Trackless Wilderness: The Refugee Experience in the Civil War,' in Edward D.C. Campbell, Jr. and Kym S. Rice (eds.), *A Woman's War: Southern Women, Civil War, and the Confederate Legacy* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1996) 29-53, 43; OR, Series 1, Vol. 22, 168.
[14] Yeater, 'My Experience,' 12; John F. Bradbury, Jr., '"Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy": Refugees and the Union Army in the Ozarks," *The Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, 57:3 (Autumn 1998) 233-354, 233-4; Frederick Steele, Brigadier-General U.S. et.al., report on the Battle of Oak Hills [August 1861], February 17, 1862, *The Official Records of the War of the Rebellion* (OR), Series 1, Volume 3, 98. The best account of the Civil War in Missouri is Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri during the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1996) 40.

[15] Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 44-45; Bradbury, 'Buckwheat Cake Philanthropy,' 236; James M. McPherson, 'Race and Class in the Crucible of War,' in McPherson, *Drawn With the Sword: Reflections on the American Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996) 94-95.
[16] McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee*, 66, 35; Mary Elizabeth Massey, *Refugee Life in the Confederacy* (1964. Reprint. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001) 171.
[17] Massey, *Refugee Life*, 46.
[18] McGuire, *Diary of a Southern Refugee*, 65-66; Mrs Mary Mallard to Laura E. Buttolph, July 18, 1864, in Myers, *Children of Pride*, 481.
[19] Kate Stone, *Brokenburn: The Journal of Kate Stone, 1861-1868*, edited John Q. Anderson (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1972) 182-183, 185, 196-197, 203.
[20] For an overview of African American women in the war see Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1985); and Laura F. Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000); and on individual states, Leslie A. Schwalm, *A Hard Fight For We: Women's Transition from Slavery to Freedom in South Carolina* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997); and Noralee Frankel, *Freedom's Women: Black Women and Families in Civil War Era Mississippi* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999); and for a harsh assessment of conditions in the contraband camps, Jim Downs, *Sick from Freedom: African-American Illness and Suffering during the Civil War and Reconstruction* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[21] Cam Walker, 'Corinth: The Story of a Contraband Camp,' *Civil War History*, 20:1 (March 1974) 5-22; Brigadier-General A.J. Hamilton to E.M. Stanton, December 19, 1863, OR, Series I, Vol. 26, 866.
[22] *Harper's Weekly*, January 11, 1862, 18.
[23] Charles Barnard Fox, *Record of the Service of the Fifty-Fifth Regiment of Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry* (Cambridge, MA.: John Wilson and Son, 1868) 73; *The Liberator*, September 5, 1862.
[24] S.G. Burbridge to E. M. Stanton, November 29, 1864, OR, Series 1, Vol.45, 1165; Downs, *Sick from Freedom*, 21.
[25] W. Stephen McBride, 'African-American Women, Power, and Freedom in the Contested Landscape of Camp Nelson, Kentucky,' in S. Baugher and S.M. Spencer-Wood (eds.), *Archaeology and Preservation of Gendered Landscapes* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 2010) 95-112, 96, 107; Richard Sears, *Camp Nelson, Kentucky: A Civil War History* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002) 183-184.
[26] Anon, 'The First Taste of Liberty,' *The Weekly Vincennes Western Sun*, February 7, 1863.
[27] I.G. Kappner to C.W. Dunstan, April 7, 1864, OR, Series 1, Vol. 32, 286.
[28] Michelle A. Krowl, 'For Better or for Worse: Black Families and "the State" in Civil War Virginia,' in Catherine Clinton (ed.), *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) 35-57, 36; Thavolia Glymph, '"This Species of Property": Female Slave Contrabands in the Civil War,' in John D. Fowler (ed.), *The Confederate Experience Reader: Selected Documents and Essays* (New York: Routledge, 2008) 293-301, 293.

[29] Glymph, 'This Species of Property,' 295-296; Carole Emberton, *Beyond Redemption: Race, Violence, and the American South after the Civil War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013) 9; Krowl, 'For Better or Worse,' 45.
[30] American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission Report, June 30, 1863, OR, Series 2, Vol. 3, 430-431.
[31] Col. Andrew H. Clark, Commander, Camp Nelson, June 17, 1864, quoted in McBride, 'African-American Women,' 95; E.B. Brown to O.D. Greene, March 19, 1864, OR, Series I, Vol. 34, 660-661.
[32] E.B. Brown to O.D. Greene, March 19, 1864, OR, Series I, Vol. 34, 660-661; Frankel, *Freedom's Women*, 30-31.
[33] American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission Report, June 30, 1863, OR, Series 2, Vol. 3, 432.
[34] Fellman, *Inside War*, 211, and see also OR, Series 1, Vol. 34, 286. Samuel Breck, General Order No. 12, OR, Series 1, Vol. 12, 52.
[35] OR, Series 1, Vol. 16, 274-275; see also George C. Bradley and Richard L. Dahlen, *From Conciliation to Conquest: The Sack of Athens and the Court-Martial of Colonel John B. Turchin* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 270.
[36] Final Report of the American Freedmen's Inquiry Commission, May 15, 1864: OR Series 3, Vol. 4, 331-332.
[37] LeeAnn Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender, 1860-1890* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1995) 53.